

The
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Some OLD HOUSES on the
SOUTHERN COAST of MAINE

*Programme of Third Annual
Architectural Competition
on Pages Fifteen and Sixteen*

*With Introductory Text by
C Howard Walker*

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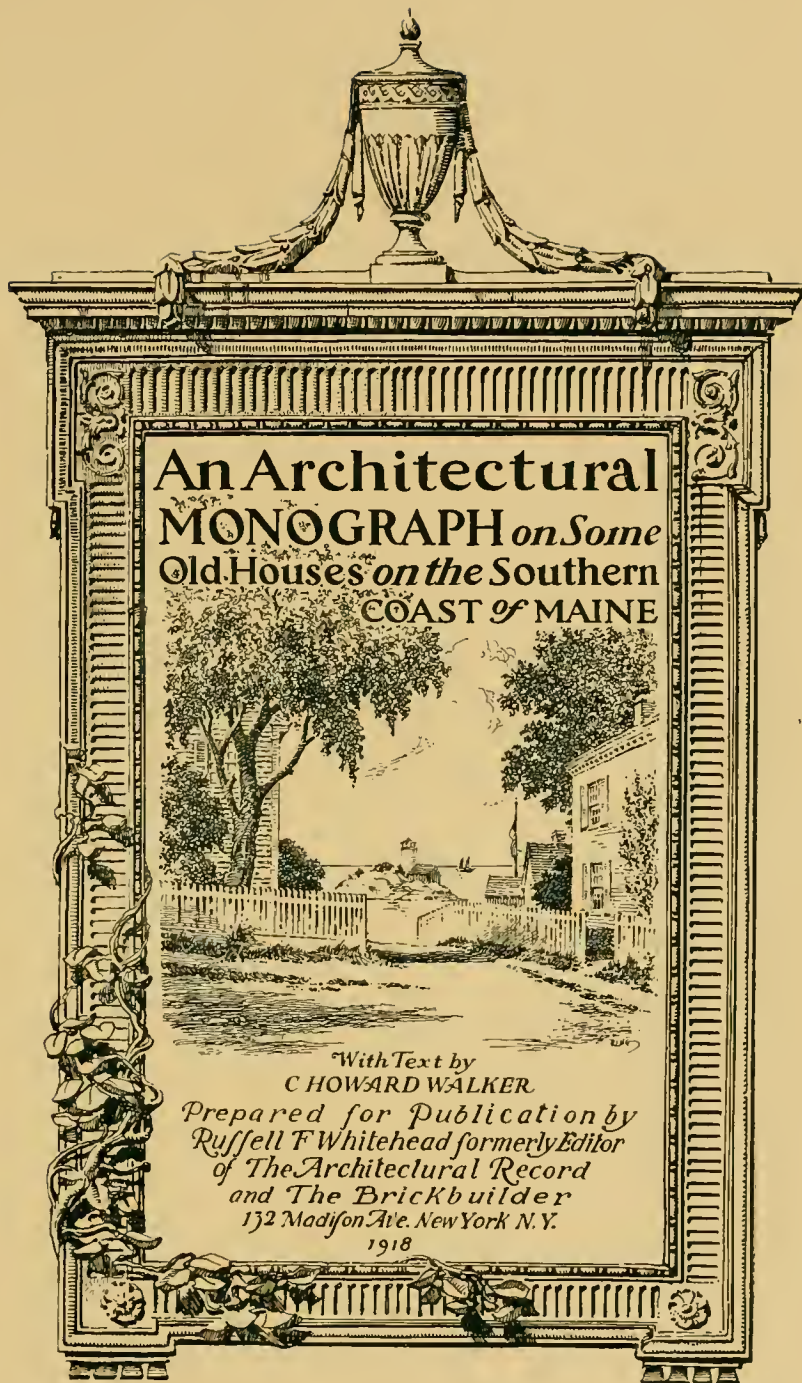
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THE JEWETT HOUSE, SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE.

A remarkably well proportioned and delicate Roman Doric porch. Note the filling of the flutes in the lower third of the columns to avoid too great apparent slenderness in the columns.

THE WHITE PINE SERIES of ARCHITECTURAL MONOGRAPHS

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION SUGGESTING THE
ARCHITECTURAL USES OF WHITE PINE AND ITS
AVAILABILITY TODAY AS A STRUCTURAL WOOD

Vol. IV

APRIL, 1918

No. 2

SOME OLD HOUSES ON THE SOUTHERN COAST OF MAINE

By C. HOWARD WALKER

Mr. Walker was born in Boston and is a descendant of one of the Yankee skippers of whom he writes. While practising as an architect in Boston for years, Mr. Walker has been interested in the various types of Colonial work.—EDITOR'S NOTE.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JULIAN A. BUCKLY

THE Yankee skipper feeling his way in the soft fog that lies along the southern Maine coast in August, watching the chart spread in the wheelhouse beside him, sees upon it the lines of the streams flowing southerly into the sea, as the rain drops run down a window-pane at the beginning of a shower. They waver in their courses as they swerve around highlands, now reaching straight through meadows and spreading into inland ponds, now tortuously winding amidst rocky ledges, but always tending southeasterly until they form estuaries up which the sea tide rushes to meet the waters from the forests and the hills.

Down these streams float the rafts of lumber from the pinelands, cut in the forests of Aroostook, and at the headwaters of the Androscoggin, the Penobscot, and the Kennebec. Deep in the forests, far up on the mountain side, lie the camps, busy through the white winters with the work of many lumbermen who are felling the monarchs of the trees, the tall, slender, straight white pines of the northland.

It is a strange anomaly that the white pine, with its home in a land of harsh winters, growing amidst the constant stress of wind and storm, should have a fiber straight as a ruled line, a surface soft and smooth as silk, and that its grain, instead of being gnarled and twisted,

should be so even and fine that it will respond to the most delicate of carving.

The logs, brought down over the snows to the streams, float down in broad rafts to the more open reaches of the rivers, to the mill ponds where the streams are dammed, and there are sawn in lengths and widths, into scantling and plank and board, and sent to their destinations.

The Yankee skipper knows all of this. He has loaded his decks at the head of navigation and is now distributing his cargo. He knows every inch of the varied coast of Maine, the long fingers of land stretching out into the sea, the inlets, and bays, and islands, and reefs; and even in the fog he has little need of his chart, but the chart itself shows penetrating arms of the sea running deep into the land to meet the rivers, each of which ramifies into little bays and coves and back waters and into numerous almost land-locked harbors in which navies might ride. And, like the Greeks of Leigh Hunt, the skipper "is always putting up harbors and creeks," for there lie his markets which he can supply from the source directly.

The coast cities of Maine lie up these inlets, and in the cities and upon the banks of the bays and coves the merchants of Maine built their houses.

The first century after the Revolutionary War was one of active shipping interest in New England. The East India trade created a long and famous list of clipper ships, which gave prosperity not only to Salem, Newburyport and Portsmouth, but to Portland and Bath and other Maine coast towns.

The whaling fleets of Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket and New Bedford were aided by the Maine shipyards, and both commerce and ship-building industry brought prosperity.

In the years between the end of the Revolu-

manded them and sailed from and came home to their own doors.

There are no more numerous or better land-locked harbors for "fitting out," while safely protected from all interference, than on the coast of Maine. The Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic and the gulfs of the Grecian peninsula alone compare with it. The famous *Bonne Homme Richard* of John Paul Jones was "fitted out" in the Great Bay up the Piscataqua River, and many a cargo has been laden from some concealed nook between York and Campobello.



THE HOBBS HOUSE, SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE.

A very simple house of unusually good proportions.

tionary War and the War of 1812 there is increasing evidence of comfortable fortunes having been amassed by local merchants all along the Atlantic coast, for larger and more important private houses are being built everywhere, not only in the towns themselves, but often at quite a distance from them. Especially is this the case in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Sheltered from the sea by outlying islands, as at North Haven, or nestled in behind promontories or headlands, with still waters at the foot of grassy slopes, are to be found the homes of these amphibiously minded merchants of Maine, men who sent out their own ships and often com-

Our Yankee skipper has been standing in closer to land, and suddenly he runs out of the fog into clear sunshine. As he emerges the long white mass of mist stretches right and left like a sheer wall cut by a knife. It seems as if by looking back he might see in it the hole he had left in emerging. The land breeze, dry and hot, is beating the fog out to sea, and before him is spread the charming fantastic coast of Maine: rocky ledges, gray at their crowns and russet and red and purple as they dip into the tide, upon their tops and sides twisted cedars and hardy savins, long reaches of green salt marsh, deeper touches of upland meadow, and every-



THE SEWELL HOUSE, YORK, MAINE.

Finely proportioned façade, simple fence with delicate urns, the square balusters to the fence are set diagonally to obtain the play of light and shade.



HOUSE AT WELLS, MAINE.
Well-proportioned façade, with wall texture refined by narrow clapboards.



THE JUDGE HAYES HOUSE, SOUTH BERWICK, MAINE.
Gabled type, ample in effect. Balustrade over porch unnecessary, too high.

where little or large inlets setting into the land.

Over the crest of one of these rocky hillocks are broad masses of spreading elms, grouped together as if planted with a purpose. That purpose is manifest as the point of land is weathered and the inlet opens, for amidst the trees is a broad white mass, a simple rectangular shape, set four-square to the winds, with a low-pitched roof and ample chimneys above it at each end. It is nestled among the trees, which were planted

apparent importance of the house with which they are associated. But there may be a long L of outbuildings, or a considerable barn.

Many of the houses in Maine were built between 1800 and 1810. That decade is an important one in residential building in American Eastern cities. The early economies of the years following the Revolutionary War were no longer felt necessary, and comfortable living, such as had been in the Colonies before the great struggle, began to reappear.



THE ROBERT LORD HOUSE, KENNEBUNK, MAINE.

Type simulating stone upon façade by the use of matched sidings.

to give it shade from the summer's sun, and is the homestead of some merchant of Maine, or at least was such in the early days of the last century, and may at the present time be the summer home of a resident from a distant city.

It corresponds in a way with the planters' homes of Virginia, though it has no dependencies of the slave quarters, nor buildings for the housing of farm laborers. For the farm laborer of the North has usually a little home of his own at a distance. Also the income of this homestead is not necessarily from the farm; it comes from merchant shipping, so that very often the farm buildings seem disproportionately small for the

The traditions of Colonial architecture had not been disturbed by the turgid stream from other sources that later appeared. When relations were reestablished with England, importations of the minor factors of house building again made their appearance. Hardware, wall papers, relief ornaments for mantels, etc., were often brought from London, but a skilled race of New England carpenters and of carvers had been created who, however, manifestly looked to the English pattern books, published and republished since 1700, for their designs of mouldings, cornices, and entablatures, for portals, and even for façades, which latter fact somewhat accounts



THE ROBERT LORD HOUSE, KENNEBUNK, MAINE.

Details especially good. Balustrade at top too weak at the corner. Sentinel window in gable upon entrance axis is out of harmony with the shape of the other openings.



THE SMITH HOUSE, WISCASSET, MAINE.

Admirable cornices, both upon main façade and the smaller masses. Note the angle of these cornices is more acute than 45 degrees, which is usually the case in Colonial exteriors, and gives an effect of additional refinement.

for the custom of often confining the architectural treatment to the façade alone, leaving the other elevations largely to take care of themselves, and also for the different surface treatment of façades to imitate stone antecedents, while the ends were frankly clapboarded or at times built of brick.

The classic styles originated in wood, the columns were tree-trunks, the facias boards, the mouldings cleats; and the reversion to wood in America was the most natural thing in the world.

cess of material, their charm being that of simplicity without crudeness, based upon proportions obtained from the books of English masters.

The work in New England, somewhat more indigenous than elsewhere in the States, was more refined in its detail than elsewhere. There is more attention paid to entasis of columns, to fineness of fillets, to subtlety of curved profiles to mouldings. The fact is interesting, for English detail was less careful in contrasting sections, and in delicacy and avoidance of monot-



THE SMITH HOUSE, WISCASSET, MAINE.

Extremely well proportioned, having almost monumental quality. There is a good portal behind the storm porch.

The style was going back to its original ancestry and in doing so became delicate and refined. For there is nothing so manifestly absurd as an excessive use of bulk of wood, both for æsthetic and structural reasons. The classic wooden architecture of New England gives evidence of a very intelligent use of the material, which was maintained after the Georgian style in England became heavy and dull and cumbrous. That this is largely due to an appreciation of the possibilities of wood, and of white pine especially, is constantly manifest. Seldom in these houses of the early nineteenth century is there ex-

ony. A comparison of Virginian Colonial details which were derived at a better period directly from England justifies this statement.

It is known that many of the New England carpenters were also ship carpenters and figure-head carvers, and there is no education relating to the beauty of lines and curves better than that obtained in designing ships. An appreciation of line and form became second nature to these men, and when it was associated with so admirable and amenable a material as white pine, it would be strange indeed if the results were not good.



THE SEWELL HOUSE, YORK, MAINE. Detail of Entrance.

Dignified portal with adequate arch moulding. Note that the pilasters as well as the columns have entases.

Necessary economies also created the restraint so essential in fine classic architecture. An interesting example of this is shown by the illustrations of two houses in Wiscasset. One, the William Nickels house, was built in 1807-08, and has both upon piazza and the house itself a very admirable Corinthian order without modillions but with double rows of contrasting dentils, Greek in feeling. The piazza balustrade was unfortunately added about 1890 with no regard for or knowledge of the charm of the old work. Mr. Abiel Wood began his house in 1812 with

distinction. Classic architecture originates as a one-storied style, it progresses as a two-storied style, and later still more stories are added. The difficulty of adding these stories successfully increases geometrically with the increasing number of stories. This must necessarily be the case, as with the addition of each story the design departs farther from the original source of its inspiration. Therefore some of the smaller and simpler two-storied houses of more modest type built outside the towns are sometimes the more attractive.



THE ABIEL WOOD HOUSE, WISCASSET, MAINE.

Simple and well proportioned.

the distinct intention of outdoing the Nickels house, but had to practise economy, and, taking several years to complete the house, omitted the pilaster treatment; yet the house is bettered in its proportions, especially in those of the Palladian windows in the second story, and the arched window over it in the third story. This latter window is a favorite terminal factor of the axis motive of a façade in houses on the Maine coast, though not peculiar to them.

The question of proportions is always somewhat intangible and often houses with the least embellishment give an impression of the greater

It was to such houses as these that the coaster brought her lumber, landing it on the shore below the site, where the frame was cut and mortised and tenoned and pinned, with the strong corner posts which so often show in the rooms and become cased pilasters. It was here that, after each side had been put together upon the ground, the day of the house-raising was observed, bringing together the interested neighbors and celebrated by a liberal distribution of hard cider to the workmen. And later the coasters bring the boards and sidings and clapboards, and the stock of greater thickness for the pilas-

ters, all of which is planed and fitted to as near perfection as the carpenter, proud of his reputation for skill, can perform his work. The fluted columns, the dentil courses with the infinite variations, which characterize so much of this work, were probably done in a neighboring town, of the finest, clearest white pine, without a blemish, thoroughly dried, and a pleasure to look upon even before it was touched by a plane. The carving may have come from farther afield. Pieces of English carving in mahogany made by some London master, even perhaps by Grinling Gibbons himself, have been found behind the paint of New England mantels, having been imported and used as models and repeated in the remainder of the work in white pine.

Two of the simpler two-storied buildings are illustrated: one the Hobbs house at South Berwick, the other at Wells, not many miles away; one on the river, the other not far from the shore. The Hobbs house could not be simpler, but its proportions are admirable, and the details refined. Its hopper roof is surmounted by a balustrade of plain cylindrical balusters, well spaced.

In studying the books from which the carpenters worked, it will be noticed that they are lacking in examples of good turnings, and the weakest details of many otherwise excellent Colonial designs are in the balusters. This is not the case with staircase balusters. The Hobbs house balustrade and the fence to the Sewell house at York, indicate that turnings are not necessary, and that they may be too small in scale for the rest of the work.

The smaller houses seldom are covered with the broad matched sidings which were used to give the appearance of the smooth surface of a stone ashlar face. This work was confined to the more ambitious examples and upon their main façades. But the clapboards which covered most of the walls were not of the coarse modern variety, laid as per specification $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches to the weather. On the contrary, they were clear and thin and often laid three inches to the weather, and at times the widths of the overlaps were graded up the wall. The fine narrow spaces between the shadow lines gave scale and texture to the wall surface. These narrow clapboards are to be seen upon the Wells and York houses.

The Smith house at Wiscasset has a broad overlapping siding. This house is unusually fine in its proportions. Its end walls are brick, the thickness of the wall, painted white, showing at the ends of the façade. The cornices are fine in their thin overshooting angle, but the Ionic cap is heavy in its scrolls. The balustrade is

very well proportioned to the mass of the house. The Sewell house at York has great distinction in proportions and an unusually fine portal with Ionic columns in antis. The broad simplicity of the details of the house and its vigor of treatment are exceptional. It has the dignity of late Georgian work with the finesse of the Colonial.

In the towns themselves, as in Salem and Newburyport and Portsmouth, the old sea captains and merchants built their houses almost directly upon the streets, the gardens at the back. These houses are treated usually with pilasters, either Ionic or Corinthian, running through two stories. If the house has three stories the lower story is made, as in the old Dole house in Portland and the Nickels house at Wiscasset, a high base or podium for the upper stories, not, as often occurs elsewhere, with the pilaster in the first two stories, and the third story an attic above the entablature. The outer pilasters are kept well in from the corner, thus announcing the fact that the architectural treatment is for ornament only. Also the entablature breaks thoroughly, the break being carried through the cyma, not stopping at the soffit of the fascia, or planceer. The definition of stories by a belt course is usual, but not universal.

On the old Dole house the very delicate porch is surmounted by a villainous balustrade.

It will be noted in several of these houses that the center axis is accented by a third-story arched window, between the square openings at the sides. This is one of Palladio's novelties, of which he had several. It always looks interpolated, and is at its worst when the arch is doubled concentrically as in the Nickels house. It is a favorite motive in the first decade of the nineteenth century and an ill-advised one. A glance at the Sewell house at York will show that its omission is a virtue.

In the illustrations of portals, that of the Jewett house at South Berwick is unusually fine, and the treatment of fine herring-bone reeds in the pilasters of the Nickels house is unique and shows how effective can be a very simple method of obtaining interesting texture.

And so our skipper sails up the river, anchors off a pier, goes ashore in his boat, and spends his afternoon in the counting-house of one of the ship-owners, who is also a builder of the dignified houses of Maine. He may have done so in the early part of the last century, he may do so to-day, for still are the forests being felled, still is the white pine being sawn and planed and chiseled and carved, still are the houses being built, and, by good fortune, following the good old styles of years ago.



THE NICKELS HOUSE, WISCASSET, MAINE. Detail of Entrance Doorway.

Interesting textures obtained by very simple means. The graduation of the reeds and darts in the arch from the same centre as the divisions of the fan-light, instead of being at right angles to the arch curve, is unusual, as is also the herring-bone reeding of the pilasters.

THIRD ANNUAL ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION

PROGRAMME FOR A HOUSE FOR THE VACATION SEASON

OUTSIDE FINISH TO BE OF WHITE PINE

PRIZES AND MENTIONS

Design placed first will receive	-	-	\$750
Design placed second will receive	-	-	\$400
Design placed third will receive	-	-	\$250
Design placed fourth will receive	-	-	\$100
Six Mentions			

Jury of Award	{	Claude Bragdon, Rochester
	{	Wm. Adams Delano, New York
	{	Hugh M. B. Garden, Chicago
	{	J. Harleston Parker, Boston
	{	Howard Sill, Baltimore

All Architects and Architectural Draftsmen are cordially invited to compete

Competition closes at 5 p.m., Wednesday, May 1, 1918

Judgment, May 17 and 18, 1918

THE great interest shown by architects in the two Competitions conducted by the White Pine Monograph Series has prompted us to hold a Third Competition this year, in spite of the unfavorable conditions prevailing throughout the country. After due consideration, it was felt that this Competition, while not interfering with any patriotic activities of individuals, might find some with the leisure to give to its study who at another time would be debarred, and so a distinct contribution may be made to our architectural progress.

As a foreword, we may recall to the designer some of the benefits to him which result from his entrance into such a Competition:

In the exercise of his skill in solving the problem and in presenting such solution in an attractive and convincing form, he is contesting with his peers, both by brain and by hand, thereby gaining strength for his private professional practice as truly as the athlete trains himself by the physical competition.

In the definite knowledge of the merit or relative merit of the result. In private practice the client is usually the ultimate judge. In one case a meritorious solution may be turned aside by some whim, while in another a scheme of inferior merit may meet an enthusiastic reception. In this Competition the high professional standing

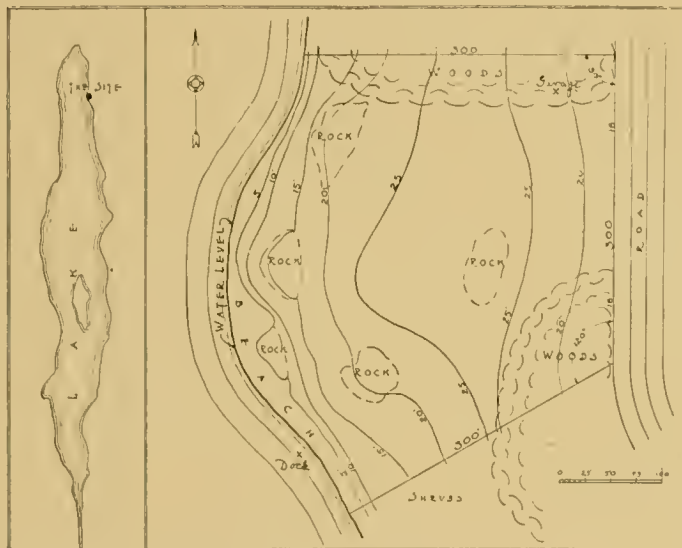
of the Jury gives assurance that the relative rating of the contestants would have the concurrence of the profession at large, or at least would not be dissented from in any marked degree. A fairly true mirror is held up in which one may see his architectural face.

The advantage to the authors gained by the publication of the best designs. Architects have often informed us of the clients who had come to them from having seen their work, notwithstanding the fact that the work seen was not at all such as the clients would wish to secure for themselves. What impressed them was that a good solution of certain conditions had been found, and

the inference was gained that there were probably other good solutions in that architect's head. It is with this thought in mind that we have taken a problem which is in itself less common in practice than those heretofore chosen.

Much of an architect's practice is likely to include the less usual problems where his ingenuity and grasp of the essentials are called into play. Therefore we have allowed the client to introduce in his own language the following:

PROBLEM: "Here is a survey I have had made of my plot of land by the lake, on which I want to build a White Pine house, for use during the six open months of the year. With the information which I shall give you, you will not need to visit the property. The lake runs north and south. The shore is hilly and fairly well wooded, also somewhat rocky, and you will see that



SURVEY OF THE PROPERTY.

my own plot has those characteristics. My site is on the east side near the north end, and contains a blunt point from which a view is obtained looking southwest, down the lake for several miles; the prevailing breeze is from that direction. The scenery across the lake is also of interest. One approach is by boat, and you will see indicated the place where I have collected stone for a dock foundation, and you may have in mind the general appearance of a boat-house to be built later, to contain a motor-boat, and to have a landing for row-boats, with perhaps a small tea-house or lookout shelter connected with it. This is not to be built now, and I merely mention it because of its prominent position on the property. Just back of my site is a road which runs through a typical American community, and I wish my house to be appropriate to that village, and not to partake too much of the cabin or so-called bungalow design from the mere circumstance that it is on the lake.

"I do not want to spend more than \$5000 for the house. If the size and number of rooms which I consider necessary indicate a larger house than it is possible to build for that amount *under normal building conditions*, you may suggest dual use of certain of the rooms. I might say, however, that Mr. Jones told me that his house, built in the neighborhood of my site, contains 38,000 cubic feet and cost approximately what I have to spend.

"I need a good-sized living-room, not smaller than 15' x 24', with a fireplace large enough for big logs, and a dining-room, connecting, if possible, with a porch where meals could be served. I would also like to have a small room for books, guns, fishing tackle, etc. If the contour of the land where you suggest placing the house will permit of a room for billiards, etc., without too much excavation, I would like it. I do not object to having two or more levels in the floors.

"My family consists of my wife, two children, a boy (fourteen) and a girl (ten), and myself. We are seldom without guests, and plan to keep 'open house,' so we would like to have five bedrooms, which may be small if well ventilated, and at least two bathrooms. Also additional accommodations for servants. We would have no objection to having sleeping quarters on the ground floor. A sleeping porch is essential. The service portion should have a kitchen, either a porch or a small sitting-room, and of course plenty of closet room.

"Although the house will be used during the open months, some arrangements for heating must be made—either sufficient open fireplaces or space provided for a small heating apparatus.

"The outside finish of the house is to be of White Pine; everything else I leave to you. By outside finish I mean siding and corner boards; window sash, frames and casings; outside doors, door frames and casings; outside blinds; all exposed porch and balcony lumber; cornice boards, brackets, ornaments and mouldings, etc., *not* including shingles. Plastering is not necessary in all the rooms and we shall attend to the wall covering ourselves.

"I have marked the place where a foundation for a garage has been started, but that will not be completed now. It may, however, have some bearing on the entrance from the road."

IT IS REQUIRED TO SHOW: A pen-and-ink perspective of the subject at $\frac{1}{4}$ inch scale clearly indicating the character of the exterior finish. Plans of the first and second floors at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch scale, blacked in solid, with the dimensions of each room given in good-sized figures. Two elevations at $\frac{1}{8}$ inch scale. A cross section at $\frac{1}{4}$ inch scale showing all heights. A key plot plan at small scale showing what is in the contestant's mind as the desirable development of the entire property. Detail drawings at $\frac{3}{4}$ inch scale of special features and of the fireplace side of the living-room. Profiles of the exterior details at 3 inch scale, in sufficient number to present the subject adequately and attractively. Graphic scales must be shown in all cases.

JUDGMENT: The Jury of Award will consider first: The architectural merit of the design, and the ingenuity shown in the development of the plans to meet the client's needs as he has stated them; second: The fitness of the design to express the wood-built house; third: The appropriateness of the design to the given site and the skill shown in indicating the possible future development of the entire site.

Excellence of rendering of the perspective, while desirable, will not have undue weight with the Jury, in comparison with their estimate of the contestant's real ability if otherwise shown.

The Jury positively will not consider designs which exceed 38,000 cubic feet, or which do not conform in all other respects to the conditions of the Competition.

PRESENTATION: Drawings are to be shown on two sheets only. Each sheet is to be exactly 23 x 30 inches. Plain border lines are to be drawn so that the space inside them will be exactly 21 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Whatman or similar *white* paper is to be used. Bristol board or thin paper is prohibited, and no drawings are to be presented mounted. All drawings must be made in BLACK ink. *Diluted black ink is particularly prohibited.* Color or wash on the drawings will not be permitted. All detail drawings are to be shown on one sheet. It is especially required that the perspective be accurately plotted. There is to be printed on the drawings as space may permit: "DESIGN FOR A WHITE PINE HOUSE FOR THE VACATION SEASON." The drawings are to be signed by a *nom de plume* or device. On the sheet containing the floor plans, in a space measuring 4 x 5 inches, enclosed in a plain border, is to be printed the contestant's calculation of the total cubage.

COMPUTATIONS: The cubage shall be figured to include the actual contents of the house, computed from the outside of all walls and foundations and from the bottom of excavation or from the bottom of floor beams in any unexcavated portion and to the average height of all roofs. Open porches and sleeping porches where projecting shall be figured at one-third actual cubage.

The cubage will be carefully checked by an architect and a contractor.

DELIVERY OF DRAWINGS: The drawings are to be rolled in a strong tube not less than 3 inches in diameter, or enclosed between stiff corrugated boards, securely wrapped and sent to RUSSELL F. WHITEHEAD, EDITOR, 132 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y., to reach him on or before Wednesday, May 1, 1918. Drawings delivered to Post Offices or Express Companies in time to reach the destination and to be delivered within the hour set for final receipt will be accepted if delayed by no fault of the competitor. Enclosed with the drawings is to be a sealed envelope bearing on the outside the chosen *nom de plume* and on the inside the true name and address of the contestant. Drawings sent by mail must be at the first-class postage rate as required by the Postal Regulations.

RECEIPT OF DRAWINGS: Designs will be removed from their wrappers by the Editor, who will place a number upon each drawing and the corresponding number on the enclosed sealed envelope for purposes of better identification. The envelopes will not be opened until after the awards have been made.

THE PRIZE DESIGNS are to become the property of *The White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs*, and the right is reserved by this publication to publish or exhibit any or all of the others.

PUBLICATION OF DESIGNS: The Prize and Mention drawings will be published in the August, 1918, number of the Monograph Series, a copy of this issue being sent to each competitor.

Where drawings are published or exhibited the contestant's full name and address will be given and all inquiries regarding his work will be forwarded to him.

RETURN OF DRAWINGS: Unsuccessful contestants will have their drawings returned, *postage prepaid*, direct from the Editor's office.

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